

Inside Front Cover

WRITE ON THE DOT VOLUME III



Write on the DOT is a reading series organized by UMass Boston MFA students to support and promote local writing.

We bring Dorchester writers, students and neighbors together to share creative work in our community.

Write on.

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EDEN'S OFFSPRING MEET: RATATOUILLE, COLLARD GREENS AND SPECIAL TEA

by Ahsila

Can't wait until Eden's offspring meet again!
Fresh plucked, red Big Boy tomatoes, and
Aubergine, aka Purple Eggplant, introduced to
Yellow Summer Squash and Zucchini, both petite;
Basil and Parsley talk to Thyme,
Pungent Garlic, and Sweet Onions, All in Ratatouille,
Becoming one in simmering heat—smelling just fine;

But nothing like those
Leaves of green; Collards,
Resisting the drowning hand;
As if fate is known.
Their greenish water clutching the heart
As the drain gurgles its goodness away;
A big boiling pot prepared with
Smoked turkey—Garlic—Onions;
Adobo—Black Pepper--a little Oil;
Red Pepper Flakes, 4 cups of Water, Cider Vinegar to taste;
And one last ingredient, Patience, needed for tender stems.
(That's right, waste not, want not; throw everything in)
Collards and all, together in simmering heat;

Flavorful tender Greens, and pot liquor: a special tea,
Nutrients' truth;
Taken all by itself, warm happiness, akin to Pharrell's room;
And dancing without a roof;

So God help the one gurgling that drain,
Next, there'll be a full boil,
If that pot liquor isn't saved.

WASTE

by Sandra Kohler

My next door neighbor, a woman living in half a rundown house – the other half, where her dead brother lived is vacant now, partly emptied, the kitchen torn out, windows broken – stops me while I’m coming back from planting marigolds at the triangle corner plot some of us try to keep up – asks me, “Why did they have to shoot that boy? He didn’t belong to a gang, he sang in choir, he died the Lord’s Prayer.” It was the 23rd Psalm, I don’t say, the paper said that lying on the sidewalk in front of #70 he was repeating “the Lord is my shepherd...”, then fell silent.... I don’t know if he died there or in the ambulance or at the hospital. It was two weeks ago, the story covered for two days in the Globe, until the execution-style shooting of an even younger boy, even earlier in the day, on a crowded square a few miles away, distracted the media, politicians, obscured Tonawanda Street’s quiet little murder, leaving a cluster of candles and stuffed animals, scrawled signs, “Peace”, “I love you, bro”, “We miss you” where he’d fallen.

This afternoon I’d walked up the street from the triangle the way I had the night of the shooting, when coming back from yoga my friend Diane and I found the street blocked by police cars, blue lights flashing; I got out of her car, was allowed to walk home when I told the policeman at the barrier I lived at #84. Parts of the street were cordoned off by yellow tape, there were police, plainclothesmen, reporters, neighbors out on porches – after I got home my husband and I went out too and saw an officer going door to door – when he got to our house he told us there’d been a shooting, a young man was dead, asked what we’d heard, seen. A little later another detective came to question our daughter-in-law who’d been upstairs rocking her baby daughter to sleep, when she heard gunshots, a car peel away. While they talked, a phone kept ringing – the dead boy’s cell phone, in the detective’s pocket.

I don’t have an answer for my neighbor’s question, though she asks it again, argues as if with me – he hadn’t done anything, he was a good kid, churchgoer, wanted to be a musician. She tries out an answer herself: they shoot you if you won’t join a gang. As I walked up the block from the triangle I’d been picking up garbage. Last summer I used to go clean up there every few

weeks, and on the way back collect trash from the sidewalks along our side of Tonawanda Street, but I've gotten ... what? lazy, tired, disheartened. There's a Pentecostal church at the corner, a high stone wall around it, a garden inside that's well cared for, but the sidewalks along it are always filthy, the church can't or won't keep them clean. Broken beer bottles, styrofoam fast food boxes candy wrappers chicken bones half-eaten burgers apple cores condoms soda cans dog turds oats and shards of glass food shit perennial as if it fell like snow or rain.

This day I pick up only the most flagrant leavings, a crushed can, a coffee cup. When I get to my neighbor's there's a plastic soda bottle at the edge of her lawn – I'm about to pick it up when I see her, out whacking weeds – and I'm embarrassed to touch it; that's when she starts talking to me about the shooting. I say yes, it's horrible, no, I can't understand why "they" do this. She goes back to her weeds and I start mulching, deadheading. An hour later I'm finished, get out a broom to sweep the driveway and see that the bottle's at the curb – she must have kicked or tossed it there. This neighbor has an arbor of potted plants on her rickety second story porch that's wonderful in summer – profuse exuberant bloom. I know the house, grounds must be too much for her to keep up alone, she doesn't have money, time, energy.

Every day I walk my son's dog along sidewalks, streets covered in effluvia, refuse. When we pass #70 I pull him away from the candles, paper signs, stuffed animals of the memorial, make sure he doesn't urinate on it. What does it say to a child growing up here to have to pick his way among this flood of constant cast-off waste, to live in this wild confusion of adult creation? There are gardens, spots of bloom, but I imagine this seems a world in which beauty is accident, sport; in which there is no safety, order, no common bond, no safe pasture; in which everything is disposable, including the life of each child.

THE LAST TIME YOU WROTE YOU SAID

by Caleb Nelson

Your parenthetical modifier means nothing
I love you too. I know you
slept like a dead person
after you emailed. After
you slumped in your bunk
and everything exploded

I had suicidal thoughts too. Remember
that log gradually crumbling beneath us
as we smoked? We read, "Everything
is meaningless." We wore a permanent
place for us beneath the Blue Hills
watching jets arrive those evenings

We left within weeks of each other
ignorant to the Middle East. We barely
talked for four years. But you called
my mom on Mother's Day. I found
my way home. Got educated. Bought
those red kicks you always liked.

When we met again intoxicated
we hardly recognized our faces.
And we bummed our cigarettes
until we collapsed. You left next
day, gone to fix the desert. You grew
a beard—in your pictures—got married.

Returning to our crumbled log
nothing has changed. But my hairs
are falling out. And I hold
some memories of you forever:
when we sat in the Sugar Bowl
watching the sunrise, high together.

EAT THIS FOOD

by Candelaria Silva

When she saw him, she remembered that it had been good between them, once. It is funny how you can forget the good times when the bad times settle firmly in your life and become commonplace.

“Do you remember the time we fell in love?” he half-sang, half-asked being a lover of that particular song by Michael Jackson.

She did. She remembered a time of long walks through Franklin Park, mid-day surprise lunch dates when they practiced beating the clock back to her office without a minute to spare, holding hands and talking about any and everything in the tiny park on Regent Street that overlooked downtown.

“Do you remember the fights?”

“Yes, I do,” she laughed. She almost remembered the fights more than she did the times of calm. Except for a few she’d pushed out-of-her memory because they still hurt all these years later, she remembered them all.

“Remember the fight we had over cans of tomato paste or, to be more precise, the lack of tomato paste?”

“Yes, I do. That was our first major fight”

“Let’s call it a falling out...a misunderstanding.”

“What-ever...You hurt my feelings over that one.”

“Your feelings were easily hurt.”

“Maybe,” she conceded. “But you didn’t have to be so mean! All you had to do was go to the store and buy another can, or ten cans for that matter. You acted like I had breached some major rule.”

“That wasn’t the point. I had gone to the store the day before. If you had just let me know we were out of tomato paste or added it to the list, I’d have picked it up. I wanted to cook my special pasta for you, baby (she loved how he said that word – ba-bee).”

“It was a simple thing but you made it huge. You yelled at me and used that nasty tone of voice that cut into me like a knife.”

“And then you left the house. As I recall, you didn’t come back for over an hour. I was worried sick about you. I thought I’d run you away for good.”

“I wasn’t that easy to get rid of – was I? she chuckled. I walked to the store and bought 12 cans of tomato paste, six Contadina and six Stop ‘n’ Shop brand ‘cause I didn’t remember which brand you preferred. I used my

last five dollars until pay day to buy that tomato paste.”

“When you came back I held you and kissed you and apologized and explained to you that you’d have to learn to ignore my storms.”

“As I recall, you never got around to cooking that night.”

“No, I don’t think I did,” he said with a twinkle in his eye. She’d forgotten how startling the contrast between his light brown eyes and his chocolate-brown skin was.

He held his hand out toward her. She walked toward him. He hugged her. She folded into the hug. He rubbed her hair, playing with the hairs curled at the nape of her neck. She’d forgotten how good it felt to have her neck caressed and her curls fingered.

“Hmmmm”, he breathed. “You like that, huh?”

“You know I do. Do it again.”

“What’s the magic word?”

“Please...with sugar on top.”

He did.

“Don’t you want to take me home?” he teased.

“You’re so crazy,” she laughed. “What good would come of that?”

“Just this once. For old time’s sake.”

“I need to straighten up some things first. Give me a couple of hours.”

“Do you still turn-in early?”

“Early to bed...stop by around 7”

He looked at her sleeping, studying every curve, dimple, hair, mole and scar. He ran his hands just above the surface of her skin to record it all and form an impenetrable shield around her. He’d come back to protect her as only he could do.

While he waited for her to awaken, he busied himself with preparing one of her favorite meals –savory chicken, sweet potato spears, and garlic asparagus. He wanted her to eat this food and enjoy it. It would help her to forgive him. It would get him back in.

She finally stirred, aroused by the familiar aroma of one of his best meals.

“Wake up sleepy head,” he said, “Sit up and eat this food.”

“Not yet,” she laughed. “I’ve got to splash some water on my face and freshen my breath.”

“Just taste it”, he said. “You look fresh enough for me.”

“It’ll only take a minute.”

“Taste it,” he demanded, a bit more thunderously than he’d intended. He could see he’d startled her. He changed his tone. “Sleepy head, you’re not even fully back are you? You go somewhere else when I knock you out like that.. Just take a small taste while it’s still hot.” He pinched a bit of the chicken and sweet potato and put his fingers to her mouth.

“Eat this food I made for us.”

She felt the pressure of his fingers against her lips and the sumptuous aromas of olives, capers, tomatoes and oregano wafting into her nostrils. It smelled so good.

“I like feeding you.”

Her mouth salivated as she parted her lips to draw the morsels into her mouth.

“No!” another voice called out to her. “Don’t eat that food.” It sounded like her Nana. “You can’t eat a dead man’s food, child.”

She woke up. Her husband had died two years before. She felt the pressure of his fingers and the food he had offered her on the small space in the center of her lips. The touch lingered there for weeks later until finally it went away. He never came to feed her again.

KITE

by Lynn Holmgren

I'd die a kite,
my best memories the windy days,
the ones that grew from a sniff off the sidewalk,
to a stiff tug on the line.
Where lift met laminate,
stretched out diamond supine.

Hand over hand, held ever so tightly,
my master's hair in his eyes,
as I gracefully bow,
my heartbeat alive in the line.

I nod and rise,
imagining how the gulls must joke
over dinner, on the rocks
about how easily I tear.

But we're not at the beach today.

Shoes dropped on grassy meadow as we run to greet the wind,
I am elevated above the trees in a cloudless sky,
pulling only in one direction,

Away.

Always away.

My flight depends on his resistance,
the sky reflected in his eyes,
each time a different dance,
with a wind that can't be memorized.

HARBORWALK

by Lori Zimmermann

Hey man, would you toss me the Doritos?
They're gone? Aw, crap. Well are you going to eat those
two mozzarella sticks? Mine now—too late!
Oh, I was going to tell you about my date.
So it was probably a dumb idea,
I say in retrospect, to take her there,
to UMass. Yeah I know it's not the most
romantic place, but it's the closest coast
to her apartment, so UMass it was.
(I didn't think of Wollaston Beach because,
I mean, it's Wollaston Beach. I'm not that dense.)
So anyway—you know, I get the sense
you find this funny. Know how I can tell?
You're laughing like a jackass. Wait until
I ask Maria what you did with her
on your first date. Then see who laughs. Where were
we? Oh, ok, so we're down by the water.
It's warm, it's spring, it's beautiful, I've brought her
flowers, everything's just perfect. Then
I open my big mouth. What happens when
I do that? Same thing every time: they look
at me like I just whipped it out and took
a piss all over their new shoes. The hell!
C'mere, I'll prove it to you—here's my cell.
Hit "pictures." There—that one. That's last week's girl.
I know! She looks like she's about to hurl!
And all I did was talk about the dead
bodies in the museum, you know they had
the exhibit of them with no skin, and posed
like athletes? See now, you don't think that's gross.
But anyway, this girl last night, she's like,
"Aw, look at all the geese!" And then I'm like,
"You know that there's a color green in French
that's called 'goose poop'? Back there I saw a bunch

of goose droppings—they're kind of a green-gray.”
I guess she couldn't think of what to say
to that, 'cause she just sighed and bit her lip
and closed her eyes. I got the urge to rip
into the pack of cigarettes I'd brought—
but women don't like smokers. At least not
the ones I've dated. So instead I just
turned toward her and reached out and brushed
her hair back from her face. The girl was crying,
tears running down her cheek. I wasn't trying
to make her cry! “Oh God,” I said, “I'm sorry.”
She put her arms around my neck and buried
her face in my clean shirt. What could I do?
I patted her back, and then after a few
long minutes she pulled back. “Sorry,” she said,
“It's ok. I'm ok.” Her eyes were red
and snot dripped down her mouth. I pulled my sleeve
out, asked her, “Blow your nose?” She laughed and gave
a little smile. “It's just that you remind
me so much of my brother. You both find
the same things funny. I miss him so much.”
I kept my mouth shut—I may not be such
a genius with the ladies but I knew
that shutting up right then was what to do.
“He died this time last year. An IED
blew up his Jeep. I never thought he'd be
one of the ones that didn't make it home.
I'm visiting his grave tomorrow—come
with me?” I must have made a face.
“I mean, a cemetery's not a place
I'd pick out for a second date, but you
just seem so sympathetic.” That word blew
my mind, but I just couldn't tell her no.
“OK,” I said. “If you want me to—I'll go.”

You want to know if it “went well”? Shut up.
There comes a time when a story has to stop.
Let's talk about anything else. Hey, ow!
Don't hit! All right—I'm seeing her tomorrow.

BRONZE JESUS AND THE RACIST WHITE LADY

by Obehi Janice

Jacinta needed to be christened by Father John but everyone was late. As usual, our costumed party of Nigerian immigrants, kids, and community stumbled into the 9:15am mass with fanfare ten minutes too late. I knew that Father John was upset because of how slowly he delivered the rites. He had started on time. He spoke slowly the first half of service to accommodate the latecomers but his Gregorian pipes were tired. He was ready to dip a little Black girl's head in Holy water.

I fidgeted in the seventh row, wearing a shin length flowery dress with puffy shoulders the shape of mushroom clouds and a lining of taffeta that made my ass itch. My long, relaxed hair laid down my back and I tried to hide under it. I, the eldest daughter at a mere eleven years old understood SHAME. Shame ate at my Nigerian insides, knowing that African time was not an excuse for being late to the baptismal of your youngest child.

I could hear Father John's exasperated sighs grow.

Sigh. These people are always late.

Sigh. These people are really late.

St. Jeanne D'arc Church had a beautiful Bronze Jesus on the Cross that towered over Father John's white and red robes. I don't know if it was made out of bronze. I don't know what the Catholic church can afford. But it shone like bronze. I looked up and my eyes swept across the crown of thorns, the torn cloth, and the nails. My gaze stopped on His face. Bronze Jesus cried for our lateness and I could see His frustration and hear His sighs from the cross.

Where was my Father?

[That was me asking, not Jesus.]

My earthly Father that is.

He was the latest of us all.

It was embarrassing. I knew it was him the minute he walked in. He was rushing, but bumbling, and angry. Angry at whom? Himself? You wouldn't have known it was a self-loathing from the way he was searching the congregation out for a face to challenge him.

SHAME.

My Father didn't like going to this church. I don't think he was ever baptized or anything. Then again, I never asked. We never talked about his faith.

My Father sat down in the sixth pew in front of me. He didn't have time to acknowledge me or my mother. SHAME plumped him down feet away from his youngest daughter and her religious saving.

"This BLACK man is sitting too close to me," an old white woman tried to whisper to her friend but her pipes were clearly strong. The entire congregation witnessed the failure of a loving God embodied in this racist old white lady.

My Father immediately knew that he was the Black man she was referring to. In an instant, he was transformed from a Nigerian immigrant into a BLACK MAN. A FEARED THING. And we, his three older children and his wife became his reflection. Our native costumes and church clothes with its colors and shapes faded into the wash of Catholic mosaic. We were singled out for being foreign, even though we belong here just like anyone else belonged here, you know? We lived in a red townhouse that my Father bought a couple of feet from the church. We belonged in this community but in this moment this waning old white woman with her trembling hands didn't want us here.

"This BLACK man is sitting too close to me."

Bronze Jesus just wanted to observe Baby Jacinta's christening but the devil simply wasn't having it. My Father didn't take the remark lightly. He matched her fear with his fear and retaliated with his verbal strength: "I am here for my daughter. You can't tell me where to sit or not sit. Do you know why I'm here? I will sit wherever I want!"

Silence was a friend for a good five seconds. Until Father John broke the space with the reality of why we were all here:

“Victor, can you join Rosemary and the Godparents for the baptism ceremony?”

My Father left his pew, neither defeated or victorious. Just bare. Bare naked walking to the altar.

And Bronze Jesus wept for our shame.

FRAGMENT 31

by Sappho, translated by Aaron Devine

I perceive anyone as like a god
who sits enthroned before you,
near so as to hear sweet interludes,
listen and lean into

your laughter, which has awed
my wing-beat heart and defrauded
my tongue. No words come through;
I speak and you undo

me, struck silent, resigned to plod
as delicate currents turn my skin hot,
eyes blind. My unbalanced body
spins askew,

slick with sweat. These tremors
trace me as wind over the grasses.
More green than them, and mortal,
I perceive myself.

(But this poverty endures)

HONEY

by Elysia Smith

I want to force feed you
a pigeon. I want to leave you
again—leave you small
from a train window, fading
on the platform, blown kisses
licking smoke, evaporating.
I want to stomp-dance
over your friends and feel their life juice
roll like taffy between my toes.
I want to steal every stop sign
and listen to you drive to work.
It will sound sideways
like rain falling with the velocity
of dictionaries.
I want to hit you.

Like that one time: the time
we ordered Chinese
and you supposed wonton soup
was spelled w-a-n-t-o-n
and it's not spelled the way, how
your body swallows the bed now.

I want to irrigate your bowels
with cement so you will shit
the density of cinderblocks.
G-O-D, I wanna slap that look
from your mother's angry, red cheek
make it redder, angrier.
I want to tell your sister
to sell herself short; even though,
sometimes I think she's a knock-out
a sorta batta-bing badda-boom thing

like show choirs. Nevermind,
I don't hold you against her.

I want to run over your dog. Twice.

Listen up because here you stand
in street lamplight waiting
for a bus to nowhere important, nowhere
I am waiting too. Rather,
I am on larger roads,
super highways, ways
that lead far and farther.

The ex-us, not extemporaneous
anymore, not extra special
or easy to extrapolate, will
merely become a burp
in my existence, a pang
of acid reflux on a sunny, summer day.

LIFTING THE SPECTER, 1994

by Matt Morrison

We meet at the Gap
by the fountain.

Looks like Orange Julius
closed.

Colorful water climbs
as I stand next to you.

Looks like it.
The Pizza Parlor too.

We're where sunlight
streams through the skylight.

Leaving room for the Holy Spirit,
you shrug, Been a long time, eh?

Amidst Class of '88 balloons
I told you that I was in love with you.

I stop at Brigham's for rainbow sherbet.
You flip through posters at Spencer's.

Did you hear the Lorena Bobbitt
verdict?

I peek inside The Irish Cottage
to see the idyllic figurines:

a farmer by a thatched roof, rosy cheeks,
shouts to his grinning wife.

Congratulations, by the way.
You and Tori must be so happy.

You know,
we have our ups

and downs but altogether
it's good. It's real good.

Reading his smile,
I propose we play a game

of Ghouls 'n Ghosts
at The Dream Machine.

SHAW RD DEBUTANTE

by Paul O'Keefe

Big brown bright yet subtle
They show wonder and peer out
from her lean angular face
There is longing in those eyes
and a hunger that is constant

This hunger is a desire
not only for simple love
She longs for what has flown away and escaped her
Yet now it floats
At first landing below cold winter's water
and even rising to the surface

Now it waits for her
Again
to be held
To feel the firmness of her gentle grasp
and finally taken to peaceful shore

JUST AS FERAL AS THE ITEMS UNUSED

by Jennifer Murphy

I grew up in the Maryvale neighborhood, two blocks south of the Shamrock dairy plant where my Dad worked, in Phoenix Arizona. Dad didn't sleep in the house most nights. In fact, most nights he wasn't home in time to see me to bed. That didn't bother me much. It bothered Barry, my younger brother most. We had three rooms in the house but Barry and I had to share one. I used to think it was because Barry was afraid of the dark and Mom just wanted him to feel safe enough to fall asleep. But that wasn't it. Mom just liked to store her stuff in that third room. All thirty-six years of her life and some of Grams' life too locked up in there.

Sometimes Barry and I would play hide and seek in that room after school when no one was home. The cardboard boxes were stacked straight up to the ceiling and completely blocked the brick walls behind them. You could only open the door half way before the plastic sun-rot bins behind would start to crack and give. Barry and I would slide in and just when the stack would start to shimmy and bend, we would shut the door.

We found a dresser with wooden inlay against one wall and a queen sized bed underneath the mountain of boxes in the middle of the room. I couldn't fit under the bed but Barry could. He would always hide under that bed when we played. It didn't take me any time at all to find him. Sometimes I let him sit and wait while I ruffled through the boxes before I'd call him out. One box had a green Chinese tea set with a swirly dragon design. Another box had two used telephones and a plastic bag full of baby clothes. It was mostly stuff like that in that room. It was stuff nobody wanted and stuff my Mom couldn't get rid of.

When Mom and Dad would fight, I'd take Barry into that room and make him hide under the bed. I'd wait until I heard the front door slam shut to take Barry back to our room. Sometimes we ate our dinner in there. I kept a bag of cheesy curls in the closet and Barry kept a box of animal crackers under the bed. I imagine us now, just as feral as the items unused in that room, stuffing our faces with crackers and junk.

One night, Mom and Dad were going at it hard. Barry climbed into my bed and pushed on my face until I woke up. Dad must have already left us by then. The house was silent and Barry was crying and I was about sick of seeing him ball his eyes out like a baby. So I told him to go hide and that I'd count to

ten, then come find him. As soon as Barry left, I fell asleep. I didn't wake up until the morning. When I found him, he was sleeping under the bed near a pile of crushed crackers and a few dead cockroaches lined up in a row. There was also a large stained glass angel. It was pink and attached at the base was a night light.

That morning as we headed out to school, we found Dad three-sheets with a handle of Cuervo, in the flowerbed out front. Mom kicked him in his gut with the tip of her heel, told him to lace up his boots and get to work. Before bedtime, I plugged the nightlight into the outlet in our room and turned it on. Barry was happy. Most nights Barry would keep me up talking just because he wanted to fall asleep before I did, but not that night. Barry didn't make a sound.

After we fell asleep, Dad burst into our room. He yelled about how all of the lights in the house were on and how he was the only one to pay for it. He yanked the angel from the socket and slammed the bedroom door behind him. I heard the crackle from the loose gravel in the driveway, under his tires as he drove away. Mom was at the counter with a far off stare and poking at some enchilada casserole when I came out. She handed me the angel and told me to get back to bed.

As I headed back to my bedroom I heard the door to the spare room slam shut, then the crunch of the sun rot bins give way, and the hiss of paper sliding across our fake wooden floors. I ran down the hallway. Mom came up behind and shoved me into the wall as she passed by. She turned the knob and pushed against the door. She could only release it a crack before it slammed shut again. There were shards of shattered plastic scattered on the floor. Barry moaned and cried when Mom pushed harder on the door. For a moment, she turned and looked at me. It is the look she will have as we leave, when Dad picks us up for the weekend the first time. It is the look she will get when the cops bring Barry home after he runs away in high school. It is the look she will give me as I back out the gravel drive on my way to a dorm across town.

MALIBU BEACH, DORCHESTER BAY

by Mitch Manning

Ribbons of oil
going out with the tide
red suited men toss
paper towels into the sea,

a dump truck
through a guardrail on 93
load of sand and gravel
tipped into the bay

soaking up engine fluid.
Reporters in black SUV's
fall asleep in their billy caps,

buffleheads pass unaware
through diesel fuel
running under the bridge
out to Spectacle Island.

Engine coolant
of the tipped-over Peterbilt
slipshods into the harbor
like strokes of Corita's paintbrush,

Uncle Ho's face
streaking across
grey winter sky
painted in rainbows.

COLOURS OF THE WORLD

by Lesleigh Jones

The world's colours never seemed to stop. They always rushed from one place to the next, and even if you wanted to notice them, you'd have to work at it. Most people didn't even bother, though. People were too busy bustling from place to place, never pausing to say "hi," never stopping to look at another person, never breaking to notice the colours that painted the world around them. There were very few people who dared to notice the colours.

One such audacious girl lay sleeping, her hand dangling off the side of her bed. The pale yellow walls were bare except for a few hand made pictures of mostly nautical scenes, all with the flourishing signature Axel Edan. Above her head was a picture of a city at night, drawn from the perspective of a person looking up at the sky. A lone yellow star was visible through the smog. Nearby were stacked three books, blue, yellow, and red. *Phantom of the Opera*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *The Iliad*. A reddish-orange cat sat on the books, staring at the girl's taunting hand. The cat jumped, a blur of moving colours hitting the hand. The faithful cat of the sun then turned blue eyes to stare at his now stirring owner.

At the feel of the soft fur, Victoria slowly sat up and groaned. That cat was annoying. "What was that for?" As she did every time she was woken up by the feline, Victoria reflexively checked the watch that was permanently attached to her wrist. 10:00 pm. She nodded drowsily to herself, slowly lying back down for another few blissful moments of sleep. She froze mid-turn. She jolted upright, covers falling off her as she frantically shoved on glasses and checked her watch once more. It read 10:00.

Victoria's eyes darted to the wall clock. 10:00. She flew into the kitchen. 10:00. She flipped open her computer. 10:00. It could not be 10:00. 10:00 would mean that she had missed her dinner with her best friend and would be late to pick up her ever punctual brother from the airport. 10:00 was simply not acceptable, yet 10:00 it was.

Colours flew throughout the room, landing haphazardly across the floor, a messy rainbow. There was no order to this rush, no carefully planned design that reflected some hidden meaning as colours so often do. Victoria darted to and fro, tugging on a shirt, grabbing a piece of bread, yanking her keys off their hook.

She should have known something bad was going to happen today. Bad things always happened on Tuesdays. Why had she told her brother it was fine to fly in on a Tuesday? She was going to be late, and he hated people who were late. The last time she had picked him up she had been late. The effects of that had been so disastrous the entire world could probably remember that incident as if it were yesterday. If anyone present had actually paid heed to their colours, that is. In reality, to others the scene probably had just been another unglorified dot on a canvas. To her, it had tinted her life a permanently darker hue.

“What’s your excuse this time, little one?” The voice belonged to a young man, just a few years her senior, who was sitting in a navy blue chair at the airport, chin resting on interlaced hands as he glared at her. He wore a rumpled collared red shirt, halfway unbuttoned, revealing a tight plain white t-shirt. His jeans were black with matching leather cowboy boots sticking out below the worn hem. Brown eyes with a harsh edge stared from behind a fringe of disheveled chocolate hair.

“What do you mean, what’s my excuse? You’re the one who called last minute demanding I skip work and come pick you up. You know, it’s common courtesy to give someone a head’s up, Leonard.” Victoria glared back at her older brother. He hadn’t even bothered to shave this morning. What had him in such a hurry that he showed up like this after ordering her to stop everything?

Leonard bent down to get his luggage, his movements sluggish, “Whatever, sis. It’s not like I had a choice. I gave you a few hours. That was plenty of notice.” His voice was tired, but there was a growl beneath it.

Growl or no growl, she was going to give him a piece of her mind. “A few hours are not enough! Next time you should just get a taxi!”

She turned to walk off, but he caught her hand, “Vic, you know that’s-”

“Don’t call me Vic.”

There was a pause. “What?”

“Don’t call me Vic!” Victoria turned around to glare at her brother. “You lost that right a long time ago. I don’t call you Leo and you don’t call me Vic. Or don’t you remember? You’re the one that said that! You got mad at me for encouraging him and said that you didn’t want to talk to me if I supported him. Said that I shouldn’t call you some stupid nickname. Said that everything he wanted was useless and I was a fool. You know what? Maybe I am a fool! I’m practically a chimney sweep next to your corporation. You’re such a big shot jerk.” She yanked her hand free and began to run away from him. People were

walking past the two of them, occasionally glancing at the raised voices, but never stopping, never pausing to really notice what was happening. They were too busy focused on their tasks to watch the colours unfold around them.

“Victoria!” Leonard yelled, running to catch up to her. He closed the distance between them easily and grabbed her shoulders, spinning her around to face him.

“It’s different now, alright? It’s different!” He paused, his eyes losing their angry sharpness and dulling into colors of obscurity and shade. “Vic, I need you.”

“You need me? Yeah, right. You need me to pick you up from airports at your whim.” She shrugged her shoulders, trying to loosen his hands, but he stayed firm, the lines of his shoulders and hands rigid. How dare he hold her in place like this! If he didn’t let her go-

“Axel is dead.”

His voice was hollow, no fiery red or dark grey with a tint of green and brown. No calming blue or stubborn yellow. No black, even. Just... empty. Even Axel couldn’t have found the colour.

“That’s not funny.”

“No, no it’s not.” His empty eyes stared into hers, their blank canvas unnerving her. “That’s because it’s not a joke. There was a car wreck after the art show, and-”

“That’s not funny Leonard! Just go away! You never approved of Axel, but that doesn’t mean you can joke about him dying! Jeez, stop being such a jerk!” She finally managed to twist out of his grasp, the hallway becoming a blur of mixed colours, clear drops falling to the ground and dampening the canvas beneath her. Her only brother, left standing in the middle of the blur, red and black remaining solid and separate in the mix of colours that swirled around him. Axel would’ve loved to paint it.

She’d never apologized for that day. Never spoken to him again until he called and asked to visit for a few days. She’d been so shocked she’d said, “Yes.” And now she was going to be late. Again.

She threw open the door, hand faltering in the process as she felt her cell phone vibrate in her pocket. The door slammed into her head and her glasses slipped from her nose, falling to the ground. She could hear the cold grey rain as it hit the pavement outside, taunting her. Rainy days were always taunting her. They were worse than Tuesdays. She closed the door, intent on finding her glasses, but heard a crunch and froze. She slowly pulled the door back and reached down by the door frame, feeling the cold silver with her fingers before

sliding the familiar object into place.

Cracked glasses. What was she supposed to do with cracked glasses? How was she supposed to drive to the airport like this? Victoria groaned.

Her cat began to rub against her legs and she allowed a brief pale smile to flit across her face. "Thanks, Ax." She scratched the cat's ears before opening her phone to check the text. Leonard shouldn't have arrived yet; the flight wasn't due back for another 30 minutes. She flipped open the phone and grinned. His flight was late. No doubt he would be incredibly grumpy when he arrived, but she would be on time despite it being Tuesday, pouring rain, and cracked glasses. She opened the door, slowly this time, and stepped outside, grabbing the purple umbrella next to the door as she ventured to her car.

The crack made it difficult for Victoria to see, but as long as she looked out of them a certain way her vision wasn't that obstructed. She reached her car and bent her head forward to the side, holding the umbrella in place with her head while she twisted the key in the door, unlocking her car. The umbrella slipped to the left and her right side began to be soaked by the rain, darkening the cloth. A gust of wind tore it from her grasp and her umbrella flew victoriously across the parking lot.

Victoria dove into her dry shelter. The bright dot of purple danced freely throughout the stifling rain, moving to and fro to a rhythm that only it knew. She had always told Axel to paint her something purple. She loved the colour, thought it was the best colour in the world. He had always complained that it never fit right, said he would paint it when the inspiration came to him.

It never had.

She turned on the car and adjusted her glasses once more. The greens and browns and greys blurred began to blur past her, she couldn't see but five feet. The rain subdued these colours, every vibrant blue was now withholding its former light. The blues were bleeding into yellows, reds flashing by and disappearing before one could properly see them.

Victoria checked her watch and then frowned at the highway in front of her.

There was a jagged blur to her right and suddenly her car flew to the left. She heard a harsh screech penetrate the air and it took her a moment to realize that the sound was coming from her own car. Her side was throbbing and her head felt as if a metal bar had slammed into it. She reached up to clutch it in pain but her hand wouldn't move. She tried the other hand, but realized it was trapped between her steering wheel and the car door. Her head was buzzing.

All she could see was purple. Purple dancing merrily at her expense. Purple

dancing in the rain. Purple flying away. She wanted the purple. Why was it leaving? She wanted it badly. She didn't want black. He had never painted purple. Black held no life.

This just in. A young woman was killed on the highway today when a boat flipped off a trailer and slammed into her car. Her car then went careening into the shoulder of the road. Miraculously, no other people were harmed in this wreck. The name of the driver has not been released yet, but she was driving a yellow Honda civic.

Brown eyes stared at the TV screen at the airport, eyes glued to the yellow car that was protruding out from underneath a purple boat. The man's face was emotionless, but his rigid posture and the white around his knuckles betrayed his fragile mental state. He flipped open his cell phone and dialed three numbers that he had needed to use only once before.

"The wreck on 93, who was it?" His voice was gruff and penetrated with worry. "Please, you've got to tell me. My little sis was coming to pick me up at the airport in her yellow Honda civic and she's always late so she would have been on the highway about now... I told her the plane was late so she wouldn't rush to get here—"

He froze. The phone slipped from his hand and fell to the floor as a rush filled his ears, ears that had just been zeroed in on the voice of a single woman. The world around him kept moving, all the colours blurring as he once again was separated, a solid form of black and red distinguished from the mix of colours around him. He would always be separated, now.

Nothing registered in his mind except the blur of colours. He had never understood Axel's fascination with them. Or Victoria's. Slowly, the world became sharper and the colours began to distinguish themselves. Slowly he could pin the colours to objects, objects to places. Slowly the man picked up his suitcase and phone and walked over to the nearest window. He looked through the pane of clear glass, looked through it at the sky that was now clear from any rain. A single drop fell from his eye. She had never liked rain. In the sky there were two stars daring to shine through the smog that enveloped the city. They shone with a certain brilliance, yellow light daring to exist in a place where bright colours were enveloped in darkness.

JAMESON

by Midori Gleason

Gold against green,
hot and cold, yet not temperamental
by his own accord. A brash
conversationalist who -- when he's gotten going --
won't drop his point, even in the morning,
arguing when I no longer care.
Get out, you've had your fun! but he'll stay
past breakfast, lunch, follow me out the door, announcing
he'll go when he's good and ready.
It's my own fault for asking too much of him.
He's perfect company but no genie is a lamp.
He's not so much brave as stupid but sometimes
that will do, particularly when I've overthunk
he'll plunk right down to underload me
with his point of view.
And he really does think I'm awfully funny,
so clever and hell, he'd wink and whistle
if he had a mouth and eyes.
I lied. He has a mouth
but I must do the whistling.

THE BARBECUE PIT

by Joshua Jones

His hands dyed red
and stiff with spice,
he hoisted the beef
brisket from the butcher's
paper and placed
it in the pit's
smoking mouth,
tapped the lid down
with his bent elbow
and stuck his hands
in the spigot's stream
on the side of the house
where jasmine vines
swallowed the windows
in pungent clusters.

He never let
us help him out,
but every time
he touched the tongs,
he was the cook-priest
and we his two
rapt acolytes.

ALL THE TIME

by Jill McDonough

Students translate Sappho's speechlessness
with broken tongue, or I can't get
the words out. One writes I want
to tell you a million and one things and I
am happy, think of one, one of the million and one
things I love about marriage. Or
at least being married in mine. Wanting
to tell her something, knowing
I don't have to tell her now. Slipping down
under into sleep, say. Or just losing the frayed
and fragile hem of it, too distracted
to remember what I need her to know.

The students already know how,
starstruck, lovejammed, we don't know
what to say. All you want to do is find
the right thing, say that which will keep the beloved
close by. But they don't know yet that once
you pull off the trick and make her love you back,
you have all the time in the world to think
of it. The new right thing, or whatever else it was
you wanted to tell her: you bought a rug, say. Picked up
her dry cleaning. Remembered what made her laugh
in Spain, remembered touching her chin
with your thumb. Car rides and movie lines, waiting
in windowless offices to hear something else is benign.
All the up-early-with-jetlag, all the wait-at-the-bar-
to-be-seated, all the folding of shirts now freshly charged
with this: we have all the time anybody else
in the world gets. All the time we need to say
the right thing, find new right things to say.

WALKING TO WORK, SAVIN HILL, BOSTON

by Nathan Hunt

From the top of the hill
I see her see
the seaside trains,
red-striped and blue water.
Cars on the boulevard
beaming along as they go. Her mouth
still slightly damp, the trees
growing closer to the shoreline, her shoes
still slightly damp from last night's
rain. Sleepy eyes
and slow thrum, we nestle against
our wristwatches and begins
a clockwork of a day.
Crossing the unpaved part of the hill,
where the swallows fly low,
where the jets fly low.

SHOT

by Ken Green

Surprisingly, getting shot in the leg didn't hurt as much as Morgan had imagined it would. Oh, don't get him wrong, it hurt like hell, like fuck shit god-dammit shit motherfucker on a stick type of hurt. Hurt that forced him to roll his eyes as far back into his head as he could, in an illogical attempt to will the rest of his body away from the wildfire sting in his thigh. Hurt enough for him to utter several vile, sexually explicit things about his own mother, of whom he was actually quite fond. Enough hurt for him to have smashed his arm down in rage-filled pain on the wooden floor of the elevated train station on which he was now lying and, in the process, breaking his watch, a fairly expensive gift from a former girlfriend who had once thrown it at his head during their final, volatile argument but he had somehow managed to catch it. So, yes, getting shot in the leg hurt like hell. And yet...

Lying on his side on the grime-filled wooden slats of the Bryn Mawr el train platform, Morgan tried to distract himself from the pain of the bullet in his upper thigh by listening to the sounds of a Chicago Saturday night on the street below. Car horns bellowed as a greeting to some and a warning to others to get the fuck out of the street. There were also voices raised to be heard above the horns and they offered the same mix of greetings and warning ("Man, give me my fucking money, I'm done playing with you."). In between the two, acting as a mediator, was music, booming from car speakers and erupting from the pizza joint next to the train station entrance every time the door opened and someone went in or left out with a slice of their less-than-mediocre pizza. The music he could hear as he lay on there on his side, bullet in his thigh, was mostly angry rap and undecipherable salsa. Not that he hated those genres, but, you know, not right now. Not with a bullet in his leg.

As a new surge of pain made its way up his leg, Morgan lifted his head and grimaced and found himself staring up at the disorienting orange vapor lights that lit the train platform. Their nauseating glow made him feel even worse, casting a pallor over everything. The pain forced him to tighten every muscle in his body in a vain attempt to push it back down. Still, on a scale of one to ten, he gave his pain an eight...no, a nine.

He had never felt worse, of course, not even when he was 11 and had gotten a safety pin stuck deep into his balls after he had tried to fix his bro-

ken zipper so that he could play street football. But he sensed there was a little wiggle room between where he pain currently topped out and what he thought he couldn't bear any more, which surprised him: A cylinder of metal traveling between 370 and 420 miles per hours (he searched Wikipedia on his phone while waiting in the emergency room later) had easily worked its way past denim, burned through his skin as if it were paper, cleaved through thick muscle (He'd been working out, we'll call it thick muscle.) and, finally, stopping when it struck bone, cracking it like a plate dropped on a linoleum floor. So, yes, it fucking hurt like fucking hell shit goddammit fuck. And yet...

The night had begun like so many other nights, with Morgan walking to the elevated train station after deciding that sitting at home on a Saturday night was like he was betraying something in himself. He left his apartment and was nearly past the crowd hanging out in front of the liquor store when he heard the train approaching the station. He quickened his pace, first walking briskly then running and, in the process, breaking his cardinal rule of never run for a bus or a train because nine times out of 10 you end up with the door closing in your face. But he had no desire to stand on the platform and wait for the next train, the unreliability of Chicago el trains being an overriding factor.

So he ran, jamming his bus card into the turnstile, shoving the metal bar aside and charging up the stairs. He reached the top and found himself in a crucial moment of indecision, trying to decide which car of the train to enter. The middle cars were the most accessible, closest to the top of the stairs and almost beckoning him to enter. But his public transportation mojo reminded him that the vast majority of robberies, assaults and exposed penises occur in the middle and last cars of the train, away from the conductor who sat in the front car. He ran up to the first car, where old people and women sat in the misguided belief that being near the conductor would bring them some measure of protection should trouble occur. But every seat there was taken, save for one or two empty ones next to people of indiscernible mental stability who looked as if they would make even a short ride of a few stops an ordeal.

He quickly tried to make his way back to the middle cars, cursing his indecisiveness, when he thought he heard someone slam a garbage can lid, then felt himself stumble unexpectedly. The sudden pain (A pulled muscle? Broken blood vessel?) was enough to bring his down to the platform where he watched the metal doors of the train close hard inches from his face.

The train jerked to a start and moved down the track, gradually picking up speed. Morgan momentarily locked eyes with the conductor, who had stuck his head out of the window of the driving compartment to make sure no one

had fallen beneath the metal wheels. He saw Morgan lying there, stared at him for a moment, then pulled his head back in with the kind of casual nonchalance that gave public service workers a bad name. “Fucker,” Morgan mumbled, and then his attention was suddenly drawn to the pain in his leg.

He slumped against a steel girder and wondered how he had pulled a muscle so badly. The run down the street to the station was brisk but nothing strenuous. He bounded up the stairs with relatively few problems, even taking two at a time at one point. But the pain now, that seemed to come out of nowhere, was stopping him in his tracks. Literally. He reached down to massage the muscle, hoping that doing so would ease the stabbing pain and felt a strange wetness on his left thigh. It was too sticky and tactile and came from the wrong part of his body to be piss. He lifted his hand to his face and even in the fluorescent orange glow he could recognize the color of blood on his palm and fingers. There was a bench just to his left, but he could only drop to the wooden platform, gritting his teeth in newfound agony.

Morgan fished his hand into his left pants pocket, working it through the spreading patch of blood and past \$7.35 in bills and change until he touched the edge of his cell phone. He pulled it out gingerly and found the screen smeared with scarlet liquid. He tried to wipe it clean on his pant leg, then belatedly in pain as he absentmindedly raked it over the bullet wound. It took at least a minute before he was able to tap three numbers on the screen and dialed.

“What?...I’m at Bryn Mawr...BRYN MAWR!...The train station...no, upstairs.” Morgan was having difficulty understanding how much more information the 911 operator needed. He had told them the “what” (shot in the thigh, or the “fucking thigh”, as he had specifically explained). He had told them the “who” he was and the “where” he had been shot. But he had stumbled hard on the “how.” What the fuck had actually happened anyway?

“Well, how long?” he asked. The voice on the other end of the cell phone said they were sending an ambulance right away so it should be there shortly. “Well, hurry!”, he said. The operator calmly began explaining the concept of an ambulance to him, the flashing lights, the siren, the way cars generally clear a path for them. “I know, just hurry up, alright?” He ended the call and was suddenly afraid his curt behavior would cause them to stop for a few red lights along the way.

Morgan carefully put the phone back in his bloody pocket and continued trying to fight off waves of pain. Only three other thoughts were on his mind: who had shot him, why they had shot him and, finally, the vast amount of

filth he was convinced covered the wooden train platform on which he was currently lying. In all his years in Chicago, he had seen all types of fluids, solids and consistencies in-between dropped, leaked, spewed, dribbled, splashed, glopped, oozed and smeared on the el train platform in an average week. Dirt and spit and phlegm and vomit and spilled whiskey and piss, and my God, how much piss has been absorbed into this wood over the decades? El platforms were notorious for serving as impromptu urinals for guys who had neither the time nor the inclination to find suitable facilities. Morgan, himself, could easily recall several occasions where he stood at the far end of an el platform in a minor act of discretion, unzipped his jeans and felt the cool of the night against his dick as he emptied that evening's allotment of beer and shots onto the tracks below. The idea of lying in someone else's piss and shit (shit and piss usually went hand in hand, so to speak) pushed the pain closer to the level 10.

Morgan heard footsteps. Someone – no, two people – were coming up the stairs to the el platform. There was deep laughter and from the volume and occasional profanities, Morgan guessed alcohol was fueling most of it. The footsteps stopped momentarily, the laughter continued and then the footsteps began again.

“You fucking crazy, man. Hell, naw.”

“Man, I swear to mutherfucking God, that shit happened.”

“Ain't no way, ain't no mutherfucking way.”

“Fuck you man, you better believe that shit. And then the mutherfucker had the nerve to pull out his...”

Morgan looked up at two faces staring down at him as he lay on the dirty platform. This was one of those situations where merely saying “S'up?” and giving a head nod wouldn't suffice as a greeting.

“S'up?” said one of the men standing over him, his eyes surveying Morgan as one might study a strange fish that had washed up on the beach.

“S'up,” said Morgan. He grimaced.

“Why you layin' on the floor?” asked the other, looking first at Morgan, then to his friend and then back to Morgan.

Morgan looked down at his leg. The stain on his pants was noticeable even under the nauseating orange glow, thought the rules of the color spectrum made it impossible to tell that it was blood and not, say, grape juice. “I think I got shot,” he said.

The two men looked at each other, then back at Morgan. “No shit,” said the first one. “Damn, that's fucked up.”

“Yeah, a little,” said Morgan. He winced as a new wave of pain began to

spread.

“That shit hurt?,” asked the other.

Morgan considered giving a smart-ass reply to what even his questioner should have known was a ridiculous question given the scenario, but he didn’t think getting his ass kicked was a useful follow-up to getting shot. “Yeah, it hurts. A lot actually,” he said while wincing.

“Who shot you?”

“Don’t know.”

“Why they shoot you?”

“Don’t know.”

The two men suddenly looked at each other then quickly twisted their heads from side to side, scanned their surroundings. They both moved briskly to the enclosure near the stairs, an area surrounded by wood and impossible to see through.

“What?” said Morgan, twisting his body into a difficult position to see where they had gone and in the process ratcheting up his pain a notch. He grunted.

“No offense, man, but them motherfuckers that shot your ass might still be out there somewhere.” One slapped the other on the shoulder with his hand and motioned for them to go down the stairs.

“Let’s take the bus, man,” he said, his voice somewhat subdued in a curious attempt at not offending Morgan with the fact that they had the opportunity to leave this scene and taking it.

As they quickly went down the stairs, one shouted back, “He man, you want us to call 911 or some shit like that?”

“No, I already did some shit like that...I mean, I called ‘em already,” said Morgan. ‘I’m good.’ He paused. “Well, other than a bullet in my fucking leg.” He laughed and then immediately grunted as the pain level hit 10.

HIGHWAY 46

by Andrea Gregory

Veronica is starting to noticeably sweat. The hair around her face is wet, and there are dark spots on her shirt under her arms and a tiny one between her breasts. Steve still thinks she looks hot. He wants to do it right here in the middle of Highway 46. He doesn't think Veronica will go for it so he doesn't bring it up. Nothing has been brought up for the past 30 minutes. They are just sitting in the car, watching an overheating engine give off white steam. The windows are open, but there is no breeze.

"I am so thirsty," Veronica says. Strings of saliva look like they are trying to hold her lips together.

"Maybe we should get out of the car so we can flag someone down."

"There is no one to flag down. No one travels Highway 46."

It is true. Highway 46 connects the middle of nowhere to the middle of nowhere and is seldom traveled. Kids like Veronica and Steve see adventure in driving fast and going nowhere. But now it is not fun.

Veronica uses both hands to push back the sticky strands of wet hair. Steve can smell her now. She smells like sex.

"Is that a car?" Steve says, looking at the reflection of dusty clouds huff up in the distance.

"Oh my God. It is a car," says Veronica.

They get out of the car. They hug and dance. They both like the feeling when things get back on track.

The car pulls up behind their car. Two men wearing all black get out. They are not sweaty because they have been sitting in air conditioning, but they are not happy. It was a long drive.

“Pop the trunk. Come on, pop the trunk. This should be quick,” yells the shorter man.

“We’re so glad you’re here. We have been waiting forever and we thought no one would come,” says Veronica.

“Wait a minute. You thought we wouldn’t come? When Frankie Mozzetti says he is going to do something, he holds up his end of the bargain.”

“Who’s Frankie?” Steve asks.

“I’m Frankie. What? You thought I sent people to do this stuff for me?”

Veronica and Steve are confused, but still relieved to have been rescued.

“Pop the fucking truck. What is wrong with you people?”

Steve goes back to the car and pops the trunk. It is too hot to question everything.

Frankie and his taller friend go to their own trunk, popped as soon as they pulled over. They pull out large clear bags packed with white powder. It is heroin. This is a big deal. This is a big drug deal going down.

“I think there has been some sort of mistake,” Steve says, walking to the back of his car where two men are loading up the trunk with drugs.

“Don’t worry. There is more,” says Frankie.

“We were just looking for some help. Our car broke down. Maybe you have us confused with other people,” says Steve.

“You calling me confused? Nobody calls Frankie Mozzetti confused,” says Frankie. “Take the girl. Something ain’t right. Take the girl.”

Frankie’s friend walks toward Veronica. Veronica screams, but she doesn’t run. Frankie’s friend picks her up and hoists her over his shoulder. Veronica contin-

ues to scream and pounds this guy's back.

“Now hand over the money and everything will go as planned,” says Frankie, pulling out a gun.

Veronica stops screaming. Steve looks like he is about to cry. He has no idea what to say or do.

“You have five seconds to put things back on track,” says Frankie.

No one moves for about thirty seconds. Steve realizes he has to take a piss. He really has to go. It is making it hard to think.

“Five,” says Frankie.

“Four,” says Frankie.

“Three,” says Frankie.

“Two,” says Frankie.

“One.”

FROM: SHOP NOTES (CLOSER TO COLOR)

by Lewis Feuer

Noticing only its polished edge, a sheen
left from the outgoing tide, you reach
to pull that stone from the kelp line.

An ellipse, the curve of a quahog crooked
in your hand, then cast
on its flattened trajectory. It skims

the back of a breaker, and lofts once
off the water.

The wind is up. The water pleated.

You wait to see it touch, and loft again.

You wait thinking, skill
will skip the stone— not chance, not
surface tension.

The stone sinks into a wind swell.

You turn for home.

Your boots twist and lift from the sand.

A POEM AT THE TAIL END OF ETERNAL WINTER

by Audrey Mardavich

My mother requested I write a song about Eternal Winter. I couldn't so I recorded the sound of loose wires scraping against my bedroom window. There is so much trash under the snow and when I finally get the chance to look up, I notice the world, which is a cell phone store or a regular store waiting to become one. I taught my niece, who is accustomed to the sun, a lullaby about Boston which goes, "Grey, grey, grey, and greyyyyyyy." On my walk home I compare myself to a front loader and I imagine myself parked in a lot under the train bridge. I will not wonder how I got here, only that I am made of steel. There is suffering in plain sight, like a white cross nailed to a sapling on the edge of the boulevard. The streets are littered with receptacles and I'm writing this on my walk home from jury duty where I was dismissed for unknown reasons. I believe most advertisements. I don't care how one arranges the stakes, I am a house without an iron fence.

CONTRIBUTORS

The rhythm of words caught **AHSILA**'s ear at a young age when she started writing poems. Writing became a favorite, often cathartic, pastime as her awareness of the surrounding world increased. Over the last ten years, she has begun to publicly share her work. Ahsila hopes that her words on paper capture a moment of the reader's time in which the connection made causes an emotional response that inspires joy and a spirit of kindness.

SHAY CULLIGAN is an Irish immigrant artist currently living on the South Shore. A graduate for Massachusetts College of Art Shay works in painting, photography, printmaking and design. A vocal critic of the visual art establishment, Culligan operates outside the mainstream gallery world, preferring to showcase his art via online platforms and alternative art venues.

AARON DEVINE teaches ESL at UMass Boston and is Writer-in-Residence at Boston Children's Hospital. He has an MFA from UMB (2013) and co-founded Write on the DOT in 2011. Aaron lives on Jones Hill and will re-release his travel memoir *Wonder/Wander* (2009) as an ebook this summer. Learn more at www.aarondevine.net.

LEWIS FEUER is a second-year MFA candidate in poetry at UMass Boston. In addition to *Write on the Dot Vol. II* his work was recently featured in *NO INFINITE: a Journal of Poetry, Art, and Protest*. He currently teaches Intro to Creative Writing at UMB, and serves on the organizing committee for the Graduate Employee Organization, UAW Local 1596.

MIDORI GLEASON is finishing her MA at UMass Boston with a concentration in Creative Writing. She has completed a series of ballads based on current news stories along with a collaboration with her advisor, Prof. Jill McDonough and designed the cover art for *Write on the DOT Vol II*.

KEN GREEN has been a newspaper reporter and editor, as well as a member of several national poetry slam teams from Chicago. He lived in Denver for three years where he discovered he is definitely not a "mountain person". After moving to Boston and Dorchester about two years ago, he started the Story Club Boston storytelling/reading series at ImprovBoston, held the first Thursday of the month. He's completed three half-marathons and a couple of sudokus.

ANDREA GREGORY is an MFA candidate at the UMass in Boston.

LYNN HOLMGREN has been living and writing in Dorchester since 2010. She is currently pursuing an MFA in fiction at UMass Boston, and coordinates the Write on

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NATHANIEL HUNT lives in Brookline, Massachusetts, where he is working toward his MFA at UMass Boston. He also works as a freelance writer, editor, and tutor. His poems have been featured in *Iconoclast*, *Mayo Review*, *Poetry Quarterly*, and *Santa Clara Review*, among others.

OBEHI JANICE is an actress, writer, and producer. Her plays include *FUFU & OREOS*, *RED DRINK*, *Ole White Sugar Daddy*, and *OLU/OLA*. She is the creator, producer, and star of the comedic rap video *BLACK GIRL YOGA*, which will premiere in 2014. Follow her on Twitter at @fufuandoreos. More at www.about.me/obehijanice.

JOSHUA JONES lives in Dorchester near the Ashmont Station with his wife Lesleigh and their dog Guinivere. He's an MFA candidate in poetry at UMass Boston and received his BA in English from Houston Baptist University. He thinks the best food in Dorchester is at Mrs. Jones (soul food) just down the road from him, and he's currently working on a book length poem called *Shenandoah Studies*.

LESLEIGH JONES is a fifth generation Texan now living in Lower Mills with her husband Josh Jones, an MFA student at UMass Boston, and her puppy Guinevere. She currently is an MA student in Classics at UMass Boston and received her BA in English and Biblical Languages from Houston Baptist University. Her three favorite authors are Shakespeare, Tolkien, and Steinbeck.

SANDRA KOHLER'S third collection of poems, *Improbable Music*, (Word Press) appeared in May, 2011. Earlier collections are *The Country of Women* (Calyx, 1995) and *The Ceremonies of Longing* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003). Her poems have appeared in journals over the past 35 years. She has lived in Dorchester since 2006.

MITCH MANNING is the editor of *NO INFINITE: A Journal of Poetry, Art and Protest* and a poetry editor for *CONSEQUENCE Magazine*. He's an organizer with the Graduate Employee Organization and the Write on the DOT reading series.

AUDREY MARDAVICH lives in Clam Point, Dorchester. She works in public radio and runs the 2x2 Reading Series at Lorem Ipsum Books.

JILL McDONOUGH'S books of poems include *Habeas Corpus* (Salt, 2008), *Oh, James!* (Seven Kitchens, 2012), and *Where You Live* (Salt, 2012). The recipient of three Pushcart prizes and fellowships from the NEA, NYPL, FAWC, and Stanford, her work appears in *Slate*, *The Threepenny Review*, and *Best American Poetry*. She directs the MFA program at UMass Boston and 24PearlStreet, the Fine Arts Work Center online.

MATTHEW MORRISON did his undergrad at Colby College. He studied Education at

UMass Boston, before finding his way to the MFA program in poetry, which he is in right now. He likes writing about family and unrequited love. Food, at least in some small dose, has a way of showing up in almost everything he writes.

JENNIFER MURPHY writes fiction. Prior to earning her B.A. in Creative Writing from Arizona State University, Murphy worked as a Camp Ranger for the AZ Girl Scout Council on Phoenix's South Mountain Preserve for 10 years. While pursuing her degree at Arizona State, she received honorable mention in the fiction genre from the Glendon & Kathryn Swarthout Awards in Writing, first prize for her scholarly essay and runner up in fiction for the Randel and Susan McCraw Helms Writing Contest. She is currently an MFA candidate at UMass Boston. Her list of favorite things includes catching rattlesnakes, ancient astronaut theory, and anything denim.

CALEB NELSON - Some Sundays, after church, my parents bought pizza and took us all (my sister, my two brothers and me) to the Franklin Park Cemetery where we played hide and seek, or we went out to Columbia Point where we watched the boats tool around. Now I go to school there, at UMass Boston. I grew up in Mattapan, a few blocks from Dorchester. The native Mattahunt tribe called the land south of Boston (including Dorchester and South Boston) Mattapanock, "evil spread about the place," after colonists arrived and brought plague (dorchesteratheneum.org). The colonists bastardized the word, so now it means "a good place to sit." There are a few good places to sit in the area, at the base of Boston. Riding my bike everywhere these days, I find myself often revisiting a peninsula in the eddies of the Neponset River to listen to the reeds, to think, to write, like I did when I was a teenager. It's fenced up now. Fences are an unfortunate invention.

PAUL O'KEEFE is a UMass Boston alumni. Currently he works with students with autism at the Joseph Lee School in Dorchester. He is very excited to be included in *Write on the DOT Vol. III* and looks forward to reading everyone's work.

CANDELARIA SILVA COLLINS lives in Dorchester. She writes and reads as much as she can. She has had essays, short stories, children's stories, and poetry published in such publications as *Glue*, *New Words Journal*, *Roxbury Literary Annual*, *The Hornbook*, *Ebony Jr!*, and *The Dictopedia*. She has also self-published three inspirational and educational booklets available on her website: candelariasilva.com.

ELYSIA SMITH is currently an MFA candidate in poetry at UMass in Boston. Her work has appeared in *Elimae*, *SplitLip Magazine*, *Tulip*, and others. In her spare time, she cultivates Meyer lemon trees, hugs her cats, or can be found preparing to join the circus.

LORI ZIMMERMANN moonlights as a graduate student in Creative Writing at UMass Boston. She daylights as an editorial intern for Broadsided Press and as a library assistant. She is currently working on writing a series of apocalyptic poems, as well as a historical novel.

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UMass Boston is located on Columbia Point in Dorchester.

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